DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 405 339 SP 037 222

AUTHOR	Berkeley, Terry R.; And Others
TITLE	A Focus on Diversity and Change: Professional Development, Partnership, and Commitment.
PUB DATE	97
NOTE	10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (49th, Phoenix, AZ, February 26-March 1, 1997).
AVAILABLE FROM	Department of Early Childhood Education, Towson State University, Towson, MD 21252, Attention: Dr. Terry R. Berkeley.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*College School Cooperation; Community Colleges; *Cultural Awareness; Elementary Education; Faculty Development; Higher Education; *Multicultural Education; *Partnerships in Education; Preservice Teacher Education; *Professional Development Schools; Student Teaching; Teacher Education Programs; Teacher Improvement; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	Anne Arundel Community College MD; Anne Arundel County Public Schools MD; Towson State University MD

ABSTRACT

Jessup Elementary School (Maryland), Towson State University (TSU) (Maryland), and Anne Arundel Community College (Maryland) have joined in a effort to change the notion of partnership in professional development schools (PDSs). The focus is not only the preparation of early childhood teachers but also the professional development of faculty and staff. The elementary school has a diverse student population that includes many from military families, students with disabilities, and students from different racial and ethnic groups; the socioeconomic make-up of the school ranges from very low levels to upper middle class. The purposes of the partnership redesign include: create a PDS at Jessup Elementary School; design and implement an extended internship program; create and update personal professional development plans (PDPs) for teaching interns, beginning teachers, and experienced educators; and integrate and align program and course content with PDPs and school improvement plans. Historically, TSU pre-service education students completed their professional field experiences in predominately white middle class schools. Some dissatisfaction was expressed regarding their level of preparation for teaching in diverse classrooms. Through the pilot program, preservice teachers are actively involved in all aspects of the school for three semesters. Education classes are taught at the school and the pre-service teachers become part of the elementary school gaining an in-depth experience of diversity. (JLS)

ED 405 339

A Focus on Diversity and Change: Professional Development, Partnership, and Commitment

Terry R. Berkeley
Ocie Watson-Thompson
Towson State University
Rosemarie S. Thompson
Jessup Elementary School
Jessup, Maryland

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

T. Berkeley

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

(A paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Phoenix, Arizona, February 27, 1997)

The research and work reported in this paper was supported in part by the Maryland State Department of Education, "Redesign of Teacher Education Program" (PDS Network Grant No. 397325). The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the policy or positions of the Maryland State Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred. Copies of this paper and information about the Jessup PDS Project can be obtained from the first author at the Department of Early Childhood Education, Towson State University, Towson, MD 21252.

S1037222

A Focus on Diversity and Change:

Professional Development, Partnership, and Commitment

Jessup Elementary School, Towson State University, and Anne Arundel Community College have come together to bring about a commitment to change the notion of partnership in professional development schools. The focal point of this change is the diversity of the community as reflected in the Jessup Elementary School, the primary setting for this partnership. The extensive initial work done during an 18-month period prior to the receipt of state funding in Spring, 1996 was not just on the professional preparation of early childhood teachers, but was extended to include the professional development of faculty and staff, pilot work being done by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) on the authentic (qualitative) assessment of young children, and other kinds of joint planning and participation in order to assure success in our efforts. And, the efforts to date, as will be pointed out in this paper, seems to have been successful. In this paper, the focus is the work on diversity.

Jessup, Maryland is a diverse multicultural and multiethnic community located on the corridor between Baltimore and Washington, DC. in the western part of Anne Arundel County. It is a community in transition with new traditions being built in large measure through the efforts of the students, faculty, staff, families, and business partners attracted to the school as well as the changing demographics of the area. Historically, Jessup, Maryland has had strong intracommunity ties due to a number of institutional programs operated in Jessup by the State of Maryland and because of the location of Ft. Meade, a U.S. Army facility. Additionally, Jessup has become a hub for intrastate and interstate truckers who conduct their commerce with a number of wholesalers who have very large warehouses and transfer points.

The Partnership

The development of the partnership has been interesting and provocative for each of the member organizations and the representatives serving on the Planning Committee. Early in 1995, the Dean of Towson's College of Education and the Superintendent of Anne Arundel County Public Schools met to discuss possible collaborations. This was the beginning of what has come to be known as, "Jessup Elementary School, A Professional Development School for Excellence."

The school was selected to be part of the partnership because it was in a stage of reidentification with an energetic and innovative principal and a population of students with many needs. It is a diverse school consisting of 63% White students,

32% African-American students, 3% Hispanic students, and 2% Asian-American students. Due to its location, 15% of the students are from military families. There is a large population of students with disabilities. Finally, the socioeconomic make-up of the school ranges from extremely low levels to the upper middle class.

As planning for the professional development relationship continued and as the new Jessup principal was making changes at the school, the vision and mission of the partners changed as well due to a new Vision Statement of the Maryland Higher Education Commission. The following, then, became the vision statement for the school and for the professional development partnership:

> We at Jessup believe that all learners deserve a safe, nurturing environment in which each person is challenged to achieve excellence. All school partners...including students, parents, school and university staff, businesses, and community members, will work together to create lifelong learners who will be productive in a diverse democratic society. To achieve this vision, we will:
>
> +create a child-centered environment for learning;
>
> +create and sustain collaborative partnerships with parents, businesses, and community members;
>
> +establish high expectations for the development of the whole child; and,
>
> +use reflection and assessment as the basis for promoting the growth and development of all learners.

Equally important is that this statement is reflective of the perspectives of the Towson State and Anne Arundel Community College Partners who believe at:

a) Towson State, the mission of the College of Education is to inspire, educate, and prepare teachers as facilitators of active learning for culturally diverse populations in environments that are technologically advanced. In this process, faculty in the College assume responsibility for designing, developing, implementing, and assessing academic programs for:

+entering College freshmen;

+community college transfer students;

+post baccalaureate students seeking certification (MAT);

+master's degree students; and,

+post master's students seeking continuous professional development.

In turn, the vision of the College of Education is to:

....build upon a rich heritage and excellent reputation and to position itself to maintain a leadership in academic program planning and public policy formulation. By maintaining this leadership role, the College can ensure that active learning occurs in diverse educational environments where contemporary information resources are available. Thus, the College can in collaboration with other public/private agencies assist in the readiness of all children to succeed in a rapidly changing, culturally diverse, and highly technical world. In order to achieve this vision, the College is committed to:

+developing collaborative relationships with the public/private sector;

+utilizing appropriate technologies which reflect the best practices in education;

+refining and reflecting upon best practices in education;

+preparing teachers to meet the challenges of culturally diverse classrooms through systematic exposure to heterogeneous populations; and,

+playing a leadership role in the preparation of teachers scholarly ends.

Anne Arundel Community College:

...has adopted the goal to be a premier learning community whose students will be among the best prepared citizens and workers in the world. Our students must continually learn new skills; need finely honed reasoning, communication, and problem-solving skills; and, need to learn the value of team work to understand the relationship among systems. Responding to the national challenges for colleges and universities to rethink the way we educate students, Anne Arundel Community College is committed to higher standards in student success, teaching and learning, and curriculum development.

Support from the Maryland State Department of Education

In Maryland, school reform has been an important activity especially because of the State Superintendent, Nancy Grasmick, and the members of the State Board. This progressive stance during the past several years has led to a number of documents, initiatives, and accountability measures being developed and implemented. Crucial to the work of the Jessup PDS has been the "Maryland Redesign of Teacher Education" effort and the formulation of the state's "Essential Dimensions of Teaching." The "redesign" is a call for the alignment of professional teacher preparation with other reform initiatives via relationships between institutions of higher education and local public schools. In Spring, 1996, the Jessup-Towson State-Anne Arundel Community College partnership received a grant from the Maryland State Department of Education. The purpose is to reflect the "redesign" to:

a) create a PDS at Jessup Elementary School;

b) design and implement an extended internship program in a setting with a highly diverse student population;

c) create and/or update and maintain Personal Professional Development Plans (PDP) for all teaching interns, beginning teachers, and experienced educators; and,

d) integrate and align program and course content with PDPs and School Improvement Plans.

Maryland's "Essential Dimensions of Teaching" include the ten standards to be demonstrated by professional teacher candidates, especially the teacher candidates involved at Jessup:

a) Mastery of appropriate academic disciplines and a repertoire of teaching techniques;

b) An understanding that knowledge of the learner's physical, cognitive, emotional, and sociocultural development is the basis of effective teaching;

c) Incorporate a multicultural perspective which integrates culturally diverse resources, including those from the learner's family and community;

d) A knowledge of strategies for integrating students with special needs into the regular classroom;

e) Use valid assessment approaches, both formal and informal, which are age-appropriate and addresses a variety of developmental needs, conceptual abilities, curriculum outcomes, and school goals;

f) Organize and manage a classroom using approaches supported by research, best practices, expert opinion, and student learning needs;

g) Use computer technology to meet students and professional needs;

h) An understanding that classrooms and schools are sites of ethical, social, and civic activity;

i) Collaborate with the broad educational community including parents, businesses, and social service agencies; and,

j) Engage in careful analysis, problem-solving, and reflection in all aspects of teaching.

Again, the "Redesign" and the "Essential Dimensions" are the foundations upon which the Jessup PDS has been built.

Soon after funding for the Partnership was received it became readily apparent that each of the partners thought much more could be accomplished and would be accomplished than originally had been planned. This happened due to the planning work we were engaged in up to that time, especially the work done by the representatives to the Planning Committee **and** the teachers and staff at the school. They were enthusiastic and wanted the original work in early childhood education to be extended to intermediate grades. Even in the absence of funding, these changes and requests for a broader participation at the school had occurred in the areas of orientation to the PDS, school improvement planning, involvement by Towson State interns and faculty as well as Anne Arundel Community College students and faculty into the life of the school, and professional development.

Now we are at the one-year stage of formal implementation of grant activities. Of especial interest is the work done in assuring that diversity became a significant area of interest, study, and on-going discussion. The balance of this paper will provide a focus on the work done to heighten the awareness of students, interns, faculty, and staff to these issues.

Diversity and the Jessup PDS

The Towson State University student body in teacher education is very homogeneous. While the diversity of the faculty has increased in the last five years,

the students in the College of Education have remained primarily white, middle class females. The demographics of the cohort of 22 students in the Jessup Early Childhood Education professional include: 21 females, 1 male, 21 white, 1 Hispanic-American, 21 Protestant, and 2 Jewish students. The average age is 22 years. Importantly, only two students indicated that they had attended a diverse school (k-12), and only two lived or grew up in diverse communities.

Historically, pre-service teachers completed their professional field experiences within a 10 mile radius of campus. These experiences were in mainly white middle class schools. Of significance, students in the past resisted the efforts of College faculty to provide pre-teaching experiences in diverse settings. Ironically, however, the comments by College of Education graduates during the past five years related to the quality of their teacher preparation at TSU demonstrate clear feelings that they were not adequately prepared to teach in diverse classrooms. These students also felt limited in their ability to integrate diversity throughout the curriculum. With this data, it was evident that those in the profession must provide quality experiences to assist in the development of teachers who are able and ready to teach in the diverse society of the 21st century.

Jessup Elementary School was selected for the Professional Development School collaboration because of the diversity of the student population. The Early Childhood Education pre-service teachers who have come to Jessup have limited knowledge and understanding related to diversity. We decided to determine the perspectives of these students related to issues of diversity. When these pre-service teachers were asked to describe their perceptions/understanding of diversity, the following are some of the responses that were provided:

*I used to believe that diversity was based in race and income level;

*I understood special needs and racial diversity. I did not understand socioeconomic diversity (TRULY);

*Racial and exceptionality;

*I really thought of diversity in terms of race alone;

*I believed diversity was just a race difference;

*Diversity, to me, basically was the different races and religions. Economic status and ability levels were not what I thought of as diversity; and,

*I thought I really knew about diversity. I had attended a diverse school K-5. But I have to admit black/white came into my mind related to diversity.

The comments of these students pointed to the fact that they have very limited understandings of the macroculture to be found in the United States. Race/ethnicity was the only response consistently given. However, the tapestry of the Jessup Elementary School population is reflective of the greater society.

Another issue related to diversity for the Jessup pre-service teachers is diversity in the classroom. In discussions with these teachers, they seemed to feel that all students in classrooms should conform and adjust to the school. In other words, if students are to be successful in school, they must change. The responses were along these lines:

*Working with students of all different learning styles and needs challenged me to work to reach every student in an effective way;

*Now, I realize that diversity includes race, socioeconomic status, education, experiences, and family background; and,

*I was presented with what seemed like every type of diversity in one classroom and I had to figure out how to accommodate and appeal to these learners.

The focus of the "Redesign" is relevant to the changing demographics of schools as they are becoming more diverse with students of color expected to make-up 24% of the under 18 year old population by 2012. Therefore, statistically, a new student majority emerges comprised of many students who are poor and disenfranchised. It will be critical that these students are taught by teachers who understand and who praise diversity. The professional development school experience, when carefully organized with commitment by all teacher candidates, can offers invaluable growth/learning opportunities for all learners. The advantages identified by this cohort include:

*Teaching and learning in a more realistic setting;

*You will be prepared to handle many different types of learners when you become a first-year teacher;

*I developed a positive relationship with children by learning to deal with different situations that arise from different perspectives;

*Realized that every child has a different background and as educators, we must be aware of these differences and treat them with respect and individually.

*The experience has prepared me to teach in a variety of settings and helps me to feel comfortable almost anywhere; and,

*I have learned to be more sensitive and not judgmental of children's reactions and behaviors.

The pre-service teachers are actively involved in all aspects of the school for three semesters, one year and a half. During this time, classes are taught at the school. The pre-service teachers become a part of the school and they are able to see students in the hallways, in the cafeteria, and talking with friends outside of the classroom. Also, they tutor students from other classes in reading. The students view the TSU students as part of the instructional team. We found that many of the teacher candidates preconceived ideas about the diversity of children and how children learned dissolved as they gained knowledge and confidence as an emerging teacher. As a result of this extensive year and one-half experience (coupled with the one or two community college courses that can be taken at Jessup), the teacher candidates were unanimous in their advocacy for all Early Childhood students being involved in similar experiences.

Popularly, diversity learning does not lend itself to neat formulas, weekend workshops, or summer institutes. Diversity calls up the most deeply felt passions about who we are as individuals and as members of multiple groups, and the kind of society we aspire to shape. One, then, can begin to understand the complexities associated with diversity and acquire the strength to advocate for diversity by recognizing and accepting the need for an unlimited understanding that learning about diversity is a lifelong endeavor.